

Message Text

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DEPARTMENT FOR A/ALS, CARACAS FOR RSO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ALLOW, ASEC

SUBJECT: PERSONAL SECURITY SITUATION IN GEORGETOWN

REF: (A) STATE 018679, (B) 76 GEORGETOWN A-78

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: FOLLOWING IS REQUESTED UPDATE OF PERSONAL SECURITY SITUATION IN GEORGETOWN FOR DEPARTMENT'S REVIEW OF POST DIFFERENTIAL. POST FINDS THREAT OF CRIMINAL VIOLENCE REMAINS AT LEVEL PREVIOUSLY REPORTED IN REPAIR. POTENTIAL FOR CIVIL DISTURBANCE WHICH COULD BE DIRECTED AT FOREIGNERS IS VERY HIGH AS SERIOUS ECONOMIC CRISIS DEEPENS. CRIME CONTINUES TO RISE; NUMBER OF INCIDENTS INVOLVING MISSION PERSONNEL, SEVERAL OF WHICH INCLUDED PHYSICAL VIOLENCE, ROSE DURING 1977. END SUMMARY.

2. POLITICAL VIOLENCE (DS-1733 ITEMS 82, 83). THREAT OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE REMAINS AT MEDIUM LEVEL AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED. ALTHOUGH NORMALIZATION OF US-GOG RELATIONS OCCURRED DURING CY 1977 AND THE ALLEGATIONS OF USG "DESTABILIZATION" HAVE DISAPPEARED, THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION IN GUYANA HAS BECOME EXTREMELY TENSE DUE TO THE CONTINUING DETERIORATION OF THE GOG ECONOMY. THE POTEN-
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TIAL FOR CIVIL DISTURBANCE BASED ON POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IS MUCH HIGHER THAN A YEAR AGO ALTHOUGH NOT NECESSARILY DIRECTED AT AMERICANS. THE DOMINANT POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE BOTH SHOWN A TENDENCY TO BLAME GUYANA'S ECONOMIC TROUBLES ON THE PRESENT WORLD ECONOMIC ORDER DOMINATED BY THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS. IF THE ECONOMY UNRAVELS TO THE POINT WHERE WIDE-

SPREAD VIOLENCE OCCURS, GUYANESE LEADERS, IN AN ATTEMPT TO DEFLECT BLAME FROM THEMSELVES, COULD SEEK TO EXPLOIT RESENTMENT AGAINST "IMPERIALIST CONTROL" OVER THE WORLD ECONOMY AND STIR UP LATENT ANTI-WHITE AND ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT. FOREIGNERS, INCLUDING AMERICANS AT POST, COULD BECOME TARGETED IN MANIFESTATIONS OF THIS DISCONTENT.

3. THREE SPECIFIC POLITICALLY-BASED PROBLEMS POSE CURRENT THREAT OF VIOLENCE WHICH REMAINS POTENTIALLY A THREAT TO ALL AMERICANS AT POST:

A. CONSUMER UNREST IN FACE OF CHRONIC FOOD SHORTAGES HAS ALREADY LED TO ISOLATED OUTBREAKS OF VIOLENCE IN STORES AND MARKETS. THERE IS REAL POSSIBILITY OF WIDESPREAD RIOTING, SUCH AS OCCURRED IN PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD, AS SHORTAGES GROW MORE ACUTE.

B. INDUSTRY-WIDE SUGAR STRIKE, ORGANIZED ALONG POLITICAL/RACIAL LINES, PLAGUED GUYANA'S ECONOMY FOR OVER FOUR MONTHS IN LATE 1977. STRIKE HEIGHTENED RACIAL TENSIONS BETWEEN MAJORITY EAST-INDIAN POPULATION AND AFRICAN GROUP HOLDING POLITICAL POWER, AND RAISED SPECTRE OF SHOWDOWN BETWEEN OPPOSITION PARTY MARXIST LEADER JAGAN AND PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM LEADING TO SERIOUS AND POSSIBLY VIOLENT POLITICAL UNREST.

C. LATEST ASPECT OF GOG ECONOMIC AUSTERITY MEASURES IS "REDEPLOYMENT" WHICH INVOLVES REASSIGNMENT OF PUBLIC WORKERS TO RURAL AREAS AND OUTRIGHT REDUCTION-IN-FORCE OF CONFIDENTIAL

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OVERALL NUMBERS EMPLOYED. UNEMPLOYMENT IS NOW ESTIMATED AT OVER 30 PERCENT OF THE WORK FORCE. THUS, A DANGEROUS POLITICO/ECONOMIC SITUATION HAS BEEN CREATED, BRINGING COUNTRY TO CRISIS SITUATION WHICH COULD ERUPT INTO RIOTING AND VIOLENCE.

4. EMBASSY IS CONTINUING PROTECTIVE MEASURES INSTITUTED EARLY LAST YEAR. GOG PROVIDES 24-HOUR POLICE PROTECTION TO AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE, CHANCERY, AND CONSULATE, AUGMENTED BY ROUND THE CLOCK CONTRACT GUARD COVERAGE AT THESE SITES AND ALL SENIOR OFFICERS RESIDENCES, 12-HOUR NIGHTLY COVERAGE AT ALL OTHER STAFF RESIDENCES. ADDITIONAL MEASURES TAKEN DURING 1977 INCLUDE MOBILE GUARD PROGRAM FOR DAYTIME PROTECTION IN SUBURBAN AREAS, INCREASED ISSUANCE OF PORTABLE ALARM SYSTEMS, INSTALLATION OF SECURITY LOCKS, EXPANSION OF VHF-EMERGENCY RADIO NETWORK.

5. CRIME (ITEMS 84, 85). OVERALL CRIME SITUATION CONTINUED TO DETERIORATE DURING 1977. CRIME LEVELS INVOLVING PERSONAL VIOLENCE ARE ON THE RISE DESPITE A RECENT PUBLICIZED POLICE CAMPAIGN TO PROVIDE GREATER PROTECTION IN DOWNTOWN AREAS. GANGS AS LARGE AS 10 IN NUMBER ARE

OPERATING IN PRINCIPAL SHOPPING AND BUSINESS STREETS. ONE GANG OPERATING CURRENTLY SLASHES VICTIMS WITH RAZOR BLADES. VIOLENT "CHOKE AND ROB" ATTACKS ARE FREQUENT EVEN ON MAIN STREET, IN VICINITY OF THE EMBASSY. TWO SUCH ATTACKS INVOLVED AMERICAN PERSONNEL IN 1977. IN ONE INCIDENT AN AID EMPLOYEE WAS HELD AT KNIFEPOINT UPON EXITING OFFICE IN EARLY EVENING HOURS AND SUSTAINED SERIOUS CUT ON FACE, RESULTING IN PERMANENT SCARRING. ALL MISSION EMPLOYEES ARE NOW ADVISED TO LEAVE OFFICES AND VACATE MAIN STREET AREA BY LATE AFTERNOON.

6. ONE RESULT OF CURRENT POLICE EFFORTS TO CURTAIN DOWNTOWN STREET CRIME HAS BEEN SHARP RISE IN RESIDENTIAL ROBBERIES. MISSION AMERICAN PERSONNEL RESIDING IN CONFIDENTIAL

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SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL AREAS EXPERIENCED 12 INCIDENTS FROM BEGINNING OF 1977 TO DATE: FOUR ACTUAL ROBBERIES (ONE HOME, THREE INVOLVING ARTICLES IN VEHICLES), AND EIGHT ATTEMPTED RESIDENTIAL BREAK-INS. HOME THEFTS APPEAR TO BE BETTER ORGANIZED AND PLANNED THAN IN PAST; IN FACE OF ECONOMIC DECLINE AND SHORTAGE OF LUXURY PRODUCTS, THIEVES ARE "ZEROING IN" ON AFFLUENT HOMES FOR STEREO EQUIPMENT, APPLIANCES, JEWELRY, AND "BANNED" ITEMS. AMERICANS ARE LOGICAL TARGET. IN ONE SUBURB WHERE SIX AMERICAN STAFF RESIDE, SPATE OF RESIDENTIAL ROBBERIES IN 3-DAY PERIOD IN DECEMBER CAUSED EMBASSY TO INITIATE EXTRAORDINARY PRECAUTION OF PROVIDING MOBILE GUARD SERVICE IN DAYTIME TO PATROL THIS AREA. (THERE WERE TWO ATTEMPTED BREAK-INS DIRECTED AT AMERICAN RESIDENCES.)

7. PERSONAL SECURITY SITUATION IN GEORGETOWN CONTINUES TO BE GREATEST IMPEDIMENT TO NORMAL LIFE AT POST AND IS THE POST'S MOST NEGATIVE MORALE FACTOR. ALL NEW PERSONNEL REACT NEGATIVELY TO THE FEAR, TENSION AND OPPRESSIVE FEELINGS OF RESTRICTION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ISOLATION ENGENDERED BY THE THREAT OF VIOLENT CRIME. MOST, BUT NOT ALL, MAKE THE NECESSARY RESTRICTIVE ADJUSTMENTS TO THEIR LIFESTYLE TO MEET THE BASIC PROBLEMS OF LIFE IN GEORGETOWN WITH CALM AND REASONABLY GOOD HUMOR. THE POST VIEWS THE CURRENT 20 PERCENT DIFFERENTIAL RATE AS FAIR WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THE DIFFERENTIAL PROGRAM. IT HAS BEEN OF SOME, IF SMALL, CONSOLATION TO THE SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF OUR PERSONNEL WHO HAVE ENDURED PERSONAL ATTACKS, LOSS OF PROPERTY, AND INCURSIONS INTO THEIR HOMES. END COMMENT.
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